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ABSTRACT

The demographics of a declining minority teaching population are well documented. Community colleges enroll 43 percent of all the Black and 55 percent of all the Hispanic undergraduates in the United States. By reviewing previous barriers to community college student transfer into teacher education programs and recent trends creating a favorable atmosphere for such transfer, a case is built for incorporating community colleges as an important rung in the teacher education ladder. A working model (The Teaching Leadership Consortium) for a community college-university minority teacher recruitment project is described. Recognizing that such recruitment efforts are complex and are complicated by institutional barriers, the paper offers six recommendations for those considering the adoption of a similar recruitment strategy. These recommendations include: (1) a formal signed partnership agreement; (2) a boundary spanner role; (3) careful joint planning; (4) coordinated student support systems; (5) a community college pre-education curriculum; and (6) field experience/preservice arrangements with local schools. Fourteen references are included. (AMH)

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# THE MISSING RUNG OF THE TEACHER EDUCATION LADDER: COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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## THE MISSING RUNG OF THE TEACHER EDUCATION LADDER: COMMUNITY COLLEGES

### Introduction

Educators in schools, colleges and universities are keenly aware of the inadequate numbers of minority teachers currently being prepared by our teacher education institutions in this country. The literature is replete with articles that detail the demographics of growing numbers of minority students and declining numbers of qualified minority teachers. The purpose of this paper is to build the case for incorporating the community college into high quality teacher education programs designed to increase both the number and quality of minority teachers prepared for our schools. In short, this paper is a description of the missing rung of the teacher education ladder.

Why Have Community Colleges Been Neglected in Minority Teacher Recruitment?

Community colleges enroll 43% of the United States undergraduate students and represent a microcosm of American society. According to the Center for Education Statistics (1988), 55% of all Hispanic undergraduates, 57% of Native American, 43% of all Black students, and 42% of Asian students who attend higher education institutions in the United States attend community colleges. The population of community college students represents a wide range of academic abilities, age ranges, and career interests. With such a diverse population of students already enrolled in higher education, why have teacher education institutions failed to recruit from such a rich pool of potential minority teacher candidates? The answer is a complex one involving many factors. However, the fundamental lack of coordination and articulation between the two types of institutions has provided a major obstacle which has been difficult to overcome.

Poor articulation has impeded student transfer from community colleges into baccalaureate programs in all fields (Richardson & Bender, 1987; Rendon & Mathews, 1989). This barrier has been even more problematic for transfer into teacher education programs. This has been precipitated in part because of the shift of the community college's emphasis from prebaccalaureate preparation to a vocational or occupational training orientation in the early 1970s (Cohen, 1990). Job entry or job upgrading skills replaced the sequential or prerequisite academic course of study most appropriate for academic transfer (Richardson & Bender, 1987). Furthermore, according to Richardson and Bender, this trend was especially true for minorities who were inordinately concentrated in the career or vocational areas.

At the same time, colleges of education were deeply entrenched in their own specialized vertical or sequential curriculum. The typical teacher education curriculum placed a heavy emphasis on pedagogical knowledge at the expense of liberal education and general education coursework. Specific teacher certification requirements essentially enabled colleges of education to corner the market on the preparation of teachers (Tom, 1987) and limited the options for students from other disciplines to enter the teaching profession (Johnson, Spalding, Paden & Ziffren, 1989). Because community colleges could not provide the appropriate course of study for two-year students aspiring to become teachers, the transfer path from junior to senior institutions was effectively blocked.

Since the mid-eighties, significant changes have occurred in both community colleges and colleges of teacher education to produce a favorable atmosphere to put community colleges in place as a rung on the teacher education ladder. At the national level, state

coordinating boards have stressed better articulation between two- and four-year institutions to strengthen and prioritize the transfer function. Many colleges and universities now feature a designated transfer curriculum, dual admission agreements and the like which guarantee transfer of community college credits into a baccalaureate degree program. With the Holmes Group and Carnegie Forum's call to reform teacher education curriculum, more emphasis has been placed on the liberal arts and general education in preprofessional development of teachers. Such a curriculum has the potential to articulate with community college associate of arts curriculum. These factors have led to a new advocacy to strengthen the relationship between community colleges and teacher preparation institutions.

Community College Advocates

Professor Martin Haberman is one of the most prominent and outspoken advocates for the community college's role in teacher education. Haberman states, "The most logical means for four-year institutions to attract more minority group students to their teacher education programs would be to go where such students are found--the two-year colleges--and to work with those colleges to develop a cooperative recruitment program" (Haberman, 1988, p. A28). The authors of One-Third of A Nation (1988), challenged educational leaders to improve coordination across all levels of the educational system. They incorporated this recommendation into one of their seven strategies for improving minority success in education. The report stated,

> The importance of understanding our educational systems as interactive and interconnected seems undisputed; educators have expounded this notion with great frequency and vigor. Yet as a nation we have not developed the value orientation or the concomitant structures required to increase the level of coordination and cooperation among our systems from the preschool to the graduate school levels (One-Third of A Nation, 1988, p. 28).

Not only have professors and special commissions suggested that the community college play a viable role in the teacher education process, teachers themselves have advocated this structure. For example, Lovely Billups, from the American Federation of Teachers (AACTE, 1987), stated, "We certainly applaud the closer look at targeting community colleges because that's where our kids are. I would like for us to go beyond minority teachers as role models for minority students and like to look at the fact that they are also resources and interpreters of the culture for the rest of the staff and the environment. Communications is essential to learn" (p. 12).

Advocates of the two-year/four-year partnerships organized to strengthen the minority presence in teacher education programs acknowledge that such partnerships and practices will not be without problems.

> Most such students (minority community college students) attend the community college part-time, where they often receive little academic advising or encouragement to continue for a baccalaureate degree. Those who complete the first two years find few public four-year institutions willing to schedule classes and provide services in ways that allow them to balance their education with the demands of families and jobs.
>
> It is true that candidates from this pool are very high-risk. It also is true that providing them with a fair opportunity will require significant new resources and close cooperation between two- and four-year colleges. But offsetting the risk and difficulties of serving students is the potential impact of their success on families and minority communities. Increasing the number of college-educated minority parents and workers offers a short-run strategy for rekindling the American dream for a generation of people who now believe it has passed them by (Richardson, 1989, p. A52).

Haberman (1988) states that for two-year and four-year partnerships to be successful in preparing minority teachers, universities must make structural changes in how they admit students and support them once they are in the program.

Structural changes must also be made at the two-year or community college level for these programs to be successful. Such changes would include actively recruiting students for the teacher education profession and providing opportunities for community college students to take pre-education courses during their two-year associate degree experience. Moreover, community colleges must stress the "transfer of minority students to baccalaureate degree granting institutions" (Minorities in Urban Community Colleges - Tomorrow's Students Today, 1988, p. 21). The partnership activities between two-year and four-year institutions have the means to strengthen transfer expectations for students. Once a student transfers to a four-year program from a two-year program, the receiving university must be committed to supporting those students through graduation.

> Institutions, whether research or teaching oriented, that boost minority enrollment by waiving regular admission standards--without providing all the necessary rungs in the educational ladder--do minority students a disservice. The high attrition rates that follow contribute to a stereotype of minority students as low-achieving and under-prepared. In such institutions, even well-prepared minority students have difficulty in obtaining a quality education (Richardson, 1989, p. A52).

Problems encountered between two-year and four-year partnerships can be alleviated through extensive planning and communications. Greene (1989) suggests that articulation agreements are critical in formalizing the planning necessary to make these partnerships successful.

> The importance of articulation agreements can not be overemphasized. In some states, policies applying to transfer from community colleges to public four-year institutions are clearly spelled out. When these agreements are not in place, students need to know which courses are acceptable for transfer credit. Well-crafted agreements involving faculty of institutions' corresponding departments are essential to smooth articulation (p. 34).

Teaching Leadership Consortium Project Description: A University-Community College Model

Kent State University and Cuyahoga Community College have developed a collaborative project designed to recruit outstanding minority teacher candidates from the community college setting into teacher education programs at Kent State. The primary goal of the Teaching Leadership Consortium (TLC) project is to prepare approximately 20 minority teachers each year at Kent State University. Kent State University personnel, in cooperation with Cuyahoga Community College personnel, select candidates for the program and provide academic and personnel support through cohort groups at both Cuyahoga Community College and Kent State University.

These individuals are certified to teach when they satisfactorily complete a bachelor's degree at Kent State University and the National Teachers Exam (NTE). Agreements are in the process of being developed with participating Ohio school districts that will facilitate the hiring of the students. Ongoing staff development support will be provided to the students cooperatively by participating school districts, Kent State University and the Teaching Leadership Consortium (TLC) for three years. Three years after certification each TLC Fellow will have completed three years of successful teaching experience in Ohio, a master's degree, and will meet or exceed National Board Certification requirements for teachers.

Presently, 20 impressive applicants have been selected and have transferred to Kent State's College of Education. Ten more students have been selected for admission into the Fall 1991 cohort group. All students who have been admitted have exceeded regular

University and College of Education requirements for admission. Once enrolled at Kent State, TLC scholars are provided a variety of social, financial, and academic support systems to help assure successful integration into a traditional university teacher education program.

The challenges of developing programs to bring minority students from the community college system into four-year teacher preparation institutions are substantial and complex. Many institutional obstacles and barriers exist which must be overcome to achieve a workable and equitable model. As a result of Kent State and Cuyahoga Community College's joint experiences in developing a successful collaborative model, six recommendations are considered which may aid other institutions in planning similar programs.

**Recommendations**

Although our project is still in its infancy, we have already learned many valuable lessons that can be translated to recommendations. These recommendations are guiding the current planning and should be considered by other institutions implementing community college/senior college partnerships in order to expand the minority teacher education pool.

Recommendation #1 - A formal signed agreement

A prerequisite to a two-year/four-year partnership is a formal signed agreement. The inner workings of two-year and four-year institutions are different. Although at first blush the differences are small, they are subtle and important. Issues such as governance, admission procedures, transferring of credits, advising, etc., should be discussed prior to starting a project. Meeting rooms, office space, parking can all be issues that will create major hassles unless all personnel involved know and understand that the project has the

approval and the blessing of top leadership.

The formal agreement signed by the presidents of both the two-year and four-year institutions symbolizes that these issues have been discussed and guidelines established to handle them. Furthermore, the signatures of the respective institutions' leadership provide a clear statement of the institutional recognition and priority. So many little problems will be encountered in organizing such partnerships that it is absolutely critical that a formal agreement be done to assure that the project will get off the ground, receive appropriate institutional support--both financial and personnel--necessary to make it flourish.

Recommendation #2 - Need for a Boundary Spanner

A boundary spanner is an individual who is responsible for bridging between the two-year and four-year institutions. If the formal agreement charts the waters necessary to assure the project's success, the boundary spanner is the navigator who guides the process. The boundary spanner facilitates, guides, nurtures personnel from both institutions in the planning process; provides a conduit for quick responses to questions raised by faculty, administrators, actual students and potential students. In addition to planning, the boundary spanner provides follow up. In our project this role was undertaken by an individual who is jointly employed by both the two-year and four-year institutions.

Recommendation #3 - Joint program planning

It did not take us long to begin to understand why so few students transfer between two-year and four-year institutions. The bureaucracy involved in seeking admissions to the senior institutions, having transcripts interpreted and credits transferred can be overwhelming. It was extremely frustrating to have 20-30 community college credits denied

or not counted during the transfer process. It became apparent in our short experience that this was a very difficult process. Prior to the beginning of this project the participating two-year and four-year institutions instituted a dual admissions agreement. This agreement provided the foundation for joint faculty committees made up of two-year and four-year faculty to review the problems students encountered and to plan appropriate curricular and procedural changes. The two-year institution partner has already made curriculum changes and is in the process of developing pre-education courses and a pre-education field experience in the two-year curriculum. The joint program planning process was informative to the four-year faculty about the types of courses and programs offered at the community college that were appropriate for transfer. It also helped the four-year institution faculty to streamline some of the cumbersome bureaucratic procedures that inhibited or, in fact, halted transfer activities.

Recommendation #4 - Student support systems

Reports suggest that between 50-70% of community college students indicate plans to transfer to a senior institution but fewer than 20% actually do (Wechsler, 1989). Of those who do transfer, less than a third complete the baccalaureate degree (Richardson & Bender, 1987). The Association of American Colleges/Mellon Transfer Project report (1989) identifies inadequate student support systems at both two- and four-year institutions as a major obstacle to student transfer. This problem is compounded for transfer into education programs because community college students rarely identify themselves as interested in teaching careers at the time of enrollment. Hence there is no way to provide the necessary counseling and support critical to facilitating smooth transfer.

Establishing an ongoing support system that enables community college students to identify and explore careers in teaching is much needed. Such supports should include introductory education courses with teaching certified faculty, a student education association, and specified education counselors.

A host of support systems are necessary at the four-year level to assist students in making the transition from the community college environment. Designated education transfer counselors are needed to assist the transfer student in course selection, in seeking tutorial or other support systems where needed. Faculty mentors should be identified who will be available to assist students in personal or academic concerns, whether it is how to study, take notes, use the library, or deal with other faculty. Often overlooked are several non-academic issues. Especially important for non-traditional/independent students is financial aid counseling and personal financial counseling. Community college students who transfer often come to the four-year institution at a point when more bills are the last things needed. Appropriate financial aid counseling helps the student access grants, scholarships and, if necessary, low-interest loans.

Recommendation #5 - Develop an appropriate community college preteacher education curriculum

Developing a pre-education course of study is an essential link. In addition to careful articulation of liberal education requirements from two- to four-year institutions, a preprofessional education sequence is needed. This sequence should include teacher education preparatory courses and related field-clinical experiences jointly planned by university and community college faculty. Community colleges must identify full- or part-

time faculty in their ranks who possess appropriate teacher certification for teaching designated education coursework, recruit specialized faculty, or allow for faculty exchange options.

This coursework sequence could be a general pre-elementary or pre-secondary track and lead to an associate of arts or associate of science degree. Credits should be guaranteed to transfer into the baccalaureate degree program and meet junior status or advanced standing requirements within the college of education. Such a coursework sequence serves the function of creating not only career awareness but a career path for community college students exploring careers in teaching.

Recommendation #6 - Employment Assurance

For those students successfully completing professional development coursework and enhanced clinical experiences, contact should be made early with prospective school districts for employment. Preservice arrangements not only pave the way for the students but assist school district personnel when analyzing where best to utilize student skills. To the extent possible, school sites will be selected which provide opportunities for students who successfully complete field experiences and student teaching to be viable candidates for teaching positions. Each preservice arrangement is coordinated with input from the school district, university and student. It should be noted that enhanced clinical experiences are planned to better prepare prospective candidates for employment and not to bypass regular application or screening procedures.

## Conclusion

The paper has provided a description of a working community college/university articulation model designed to select and support candidates from groups under-represented in the teaching profession. In addition to identification and selection of capable candidates, the model has also addressed transfer of credits, academic and social support systems, a community college pre-education curriculum, and financial aid issues. The model can be used to design other community college/university programs to increase minority representation in teaching and effectively enable community colleges to become an important rung on the teacher education ladder.

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